



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

OVER \$1 MILLION SEIZED AWARDED TO DAVIDSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE BY ICE

Lexington, N.C.—Jeff Jordan, assistant special agent-in-charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) here presented a check today awarding the Davidson County Sheriff's Office \$1,179,856.

The monies awarded were from a seizure that was part of "Operation Tar Heel Gauntlet", an ICE investigative initiative that targets the bulk cash smuggling activities of drug trafficking and money laundering organizations that utilize the inter-state highway system located within the middle and western judicial districts of North Carolina.

The over \$1 million was seized as a result of a routine traffic stop conducted by a Davidson County Sheriff's Office detective near Lexington, North Carolina on Feb. 11, 2004. A consent search of the vehicle revealed that the U.S. currency had been hidden in several compartments throughout the vehicle.

Jose Martinez and Jesus Escobar-Chao were subsequently arrested and charged by ICE agents for their involvement in the bulk cash smuggling. They were indicted by a federal grand jury on February 23, 2004. Both were sentenced to 37 months in prison.

"Operation Tar Heel Gauntlet is a cooperative effort between ICE and state and local law enforcement officers in North Carolina," said Jeff Jordan. "This successful partnership and the seizures strengthen our ability to fight crime on a broader spectrum while providing additional funding for improving our organizations."

ICE's Asset Forfeiture Program, initiated under the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984, provides funding to state and local law enforcement agencies that participate in ICE investigations that lead to seizures and forfeitures. The law allows the government to take illegal profits from crimes such as narcotics smuggling, money laundering, and fraud.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.